

# Transformation - Thinking Out of the Box

Walter F. Ullrich spoke to Dan Gardner, Director of Readiness and Training Policy and Programs, Office of the Secretary of Defense, and Brigadier General Gundars Abols, Latvian Army, Deputy Assistant Chief of Staff Joint Education and Training (DACOS JET), Allied Command Transformation (ACT) about training and transformation.

**MS&T:** Transformation has become the buzzword for both politicians and military in their search for new answers to the threat situation of the 21st century. Mr Gardner, could you describe in brief how the US DoD defines transformation?

**Mr Gardner:** Let me say first that the Department has a Force Transformation Office, which was led by Vice Adm. Arthur Cebrowski and now has Mr. Terry J. Pudas as Acting Director. They probably have an "official" definition. So my definition would be from my experience with training transformation and that is to say: How do we effect the necessary change to have the most effective and efficient and successful organisation for the future. It's thinking outside the box; it's thinking about global constructs, a global economy, a global cultural and social and political interface and network on a global scale. That's transformation! And in this particular sense, fighting the global war against terrorism is working together to transform together - not just our country but all the free countries of the world.



Two transformation experts: Dan Gardner (left) and BG Gundar Abols.

Image credit: W. Ullrich

**MS&T:** General, is that the way the ACT sees transformation?

**General Abols:** The question is how to achieve the changes necessary to obtain certain capabilities. This is an issue of the alliance's capabilities - transforming not only in the educational field but also in logistics, military doctrines and so on. That's a huge area. At the ACT we are in the middle of reviewing concepts and doctrines with the help of lessons learned also from the US side. And we have started discussing the future. During the Secretary-General's Transformation Conference in April 2005, ideas were laid out regarding what NATO's political and military future should be.

**MS&T:** Mr Gardner, what role does training play in that transformation process?

**Gardner:** Well, we truly believe that we must train the way that we anticipate operating. We need to not only prepare to operate correctly, but we need to learn as we train to ensure success in joint operations. That of course is internal to our own forces, and then, on a global scale, to where our allies and partners are. How do we integrate our strengths and our capabilities to have the maximum impact and success on the battlefield? I don't mean just in a warfighting sense but in a stability and support-operations sense, in a prevention sense, in a peace-making and peace-sustainment sense, in a free global economy in a free global political environment. Training transformation must be the foundation for all of that. We must be able to train, to learn, to educate ourselves to be as productive and successful and efficient as we possibly can, in moving ourselves and our world friends and partners forward - together. There is one word for it and that is "team". The other word that comes into my mind all the time is "balance". How do we balance the resources and our challenges for training in our militaries with our domestic issues, with helping other nations to work together as a global partner?

**MS&T:** How do you address today's three-block war, changing instantly from humanitarian aid to peacekeeping operations and combat, in training and education?

**Gardner:** I think this goes back to the concept of the citizen soldier. That we need our military force not just to be trained to fight but also to be trained to preclude fighting and to facilitate that process. It's one thing to go in and destroy an objective. But when you are done you may have a destroyed objective and a lot of people that are very upset with you. To me we have to train our military forces to use the right amount of

force, the right type of force, and force comes in many venues, in many types of capabilities. We had our operation for the tsunami where a specific command working with many countries did a tremendous job of humanitarian relief. That's one capability! We have our forces in Iraq right now, who are doing stability and support operations, trying to help Iraq to successful governance in peace. And we had the Iraq conflict where we actually had full-scale combat for a while. So there is that full range! It is a very complex environment and a very complex challenge. But I think we are also very fortunate in our military, and from what I can tell in many other militaries which I had a chance to witness, we have a very intelligent and committed generation of young people and senior leadership who are capable of doing that. I mean the human person is a pretty competent individual if he or she is trained and educated properly. So that's our challenge!

**MS&T:** The Iraqi wars showed that even the US relies on allies or coalitions. How do you ensure that the US transforms in partnership with partners and friends?

**Gardner:** I think there are conferences like ITEC where we share ideas and we communicate with each other. We try to reduce the barriers and increase understanding, improve communications. One of the big challenges that we have in this global war on terrorism is understanding the cultures of some of these distant countries and different population centres. There are language difficulties - another major challenge. It's very hard to communicate peaceful intentions if you can't speak the language. And therefore you need to have a greater language capability. I think we have realised that. The Department of Defense has just published policy, "Defense Language Transformation Roadmap", which says that we are going to commit a significantly greater amount of resources: time, money and effort to improving the language capabilities of our forces. Every junior officer will have a second language. Each flag officer in the future will be proficient in a second language.

**Abols:** At the same time as the US is realising the need to work with partners and allies, the ACT is doing the same: looking more and more for partnerships, even more so after the Istanbul summit. And how are we doing this? Through working programmes, seminars, conferences. In addition, we are getting more and more involved in the educational and training field. We are looking forward to establishing a new partnership through a NATO partner educational training network, where we will try to link together

as a hub all the educational facilities which deal with the military education in NATO countries, as well as in partner countries. We will come together certainly one or two times a year, and try to elaborate on where we are, where certain problems in our relationship are, and where we have work to do.

**MS&T:** General, how can smaller countries like Latvia contribute to the overall transformation process in NATO?

**Abols:** Latvia already contributes quite significantly when you compare it to the total size of the population - more than some medium-sized NATO countries sometimes. We are operating in Iraq; we are contributing in the Kosovo and also in Afghanistan. Like other smaller countries we have two options. One is to participate together with partner forces, which is in my understanding achieved by multinationality, by more multinational forces. And the second thing is specialisation. In the case of specialisation I think we already bring in certain skills with our naval demining divers. We also deal with EOD (Explosive Ordnance Disposal), which is a greatly needed nowadays in the new security environment.

**MS&T:** Gentlemen, one final conclusion?

**Gardner:** We are trying to transform our military, our entire Department of Defence - in my area military training - and at the same time work with our friends, partners and allies to ensure that we are all part of the team in transformation. We have other team mates and team members that bring up very valuable contributions to the game. General Abols just mentioned Latvia's important contribution. It is critical to have special capabilities that we can blend and merge as necessary. So I think, and I would hope that I am not overly optimistic, I feel very good about the way things are going. And I would just ask that people continue to communicate their issues, their concerns, their good ideas, their concepts to the team, so that we can advance together.

**Abols:** I think that what we need to do is to work together better. The ACT, a NATO command residing in the US, is the political statement to have a much closer relationship with the US! To get more valuable information of the lessons learned or how things are done in the US. Also at the ACT we are working in the joint educational training area. For my part, I am interested in bringing together the Joint National Training Capability (JNTC) and NATO's existing joint educational and training sites. And, within the context of globalisation, I am looking forward to finding partners and also coalitions to be part of that. **MS&T**